Minutes
Amherst Charter Commission meeting of January 25, 2017

Members present: Andy Churchill, Tom Fricke, Meg Gage, Nick Grabbe, Mandi Jo Hanneke, Irv Rhodes (remotely, by audio), Julia Rueschemeyer (arrived at 7:05 p.m.), Diana Stein, Gerry Weiss. Members Absent: None. Guests: Michael Sullivan and Mayor Narkewicz. In attendance: Kitty Axelson-Berry, Stephanie O'Keeffe, Larry Kelly, Maurianne Adams, Walter Wolnik, Richard Morse, Ted Parker, Kevin Collins.

AGENDA:

1. Call to order, approve agenda, approve minutes (5 minutes)
2. Discussion with Northampton mayor David Narkewicz and South Hadley town administrator Michael Sullivan (1 hour)
3. Compare improved Town Meeting-based model to Council-based model (1.5 hour)
4. Public comment (10 minutes)
4. Plan for upcoming meetings (15 minutes)
5. Topics not reasonably anticipated by the Chair 48 hours prior to the meeting
6. Adjourn

The meeting was called to order at 6:35pm in the Police Station Community Room.

Churchill stated that there is a new town government policy allowing remote participation as of Monday night. He said that Rhodes is attending remotely for reason of geographic distance under 940cmr (5). All members affirmed that Rhodes' attendance via laptop audio can be heard by everyone present. Churchill then read the agenda.

DISCUSSION WITH NORTHAMPTON MAYOR DAVID NARKEWICZ AND SOUTH HADLEY TOWN ADMINISTRATOR MICHAEL SULLIVAN

Churchill introduced the distinguished guests: Northampton Mayor Stephen Narkewicz, and South Hadley Town Administrator Michael Sullivan. Both participated in previous interviews and are considered "very knowledgeable and thoughtful contributors." Gage asked about updating listening workshops. Stein asked who is taking minutes.

Churchill said that the Commission is not as familiar with a council-based form of government and wants insights from the guests. The questions include: what are the benefits vs. trade-offs of a mayor-council system? What efforts in municipalities result in citizen participation? How do a mayor and council work together? How to balance political accountability with management expertise? Who runs day-to-day oversight? Are there problems with mayor-council corruption? Is money a large influence on elections? Is there a difficulty in recruitment? Do you have advice on municipal structure? Churchill acknowledged the open-ended nature of questions and said he seeks to give context to the discussion. He then opened the floor to guests.

Sullivan stated he was mayor of city of Holyoke for ten years, but decided not to run after fifth term. He then came to South Hadley, where he's been Town Administrator for four years. He

was on city council for two years ('88 and '89) before he was mayor. He said his experience growing up as a paper boy led to an essential understanding about the cultural diversity of residents.

Narkewicz was elected mayor of Northampton in 2011. Previously, he served on City Council for six years, and prior to that had worked as a legislative aid to John Olver and earlier in D.C. He had been a political science major at UMass.. Narkewicz stated that the Northampton mayor manages day-to-day operations, hires and appoints staff, and presents budgets to City Council. The City Council can create local ordinances (by-laws) which are submitted to the mayor for approval, although the council can override. The City Council approves all financial matters and department heads, from "police chiefs to parks and rec heads." Churchill asked if this occurred by majority vote. Narkewicz affirmed.

Narkewicz stated that he attends meetings of city council, and estimates 150 people at previous meeting. Social media and neighborhood associations aid in citizen participation. Narkewicz attempts to do public outreach during "challenging budget times."

Churchill inquired as to differences in an executive working with a council vs. a town meeting.

Sullivan stated that municipalities vary widely in government structure, with 351 different government structures in the state. Holyoke had 7 wards, 8 at large councilors. He said that the process of trying to maintain a budget can feel "disjointed" when people are responsible to different bodies, some to mayor, some to Council. Sullivan believed Narkewicz would agree Northampton is a special case in regard to mayoral-council relations. Most others are contentious relationships due to politics, councils are often a group of people ready to run for the mayor's job. Sullivan recommends that Amherst "adopt and emulate what has happened in Northampton," but cautioned that it is rare for a mayor-council relationship to be so pleasant. Sullivan thought it important to recognize that there is a "different texture, different fabric in every community."

Narkewicz cautioned, "don't do it like Holyoke," in constructing a government without a "clear delineation of authority." Narkewicz stated that he created a professional finance team because fiscal management "shouldn't be a popularity contest." Narkewicz recommended being very clear in defining roles of legislative and executive branches, so that they don't do each other's jobs. For example, ensuring councils can't give orders to executive branch employees and create "tension between who's running the city." Finally, Narkewicz stated that the mayor is very much like a town manager and strongly emphasized utilizing plain language in role delineations.

Churchill: Can you expand on role of city council, relationships between neighborhoods, council, and mayor?

Narkewicz: Ward councilors vary communication styles depending on the culture of the ward. They use newsletters, listserv, meetings, etc.

Gage inquired about expectations of town staff to involve themselves directly with citizens, and referenced Cambridge which does this effectively.

Narkewicz: Counselors have power to request town staff to come to specific meetings. For example, a neighborhood has an issue with public safety and accordingly police chief comes to neighborhood meeting.

Gage appreciated points made by guests about significance of differing ward cultures and asked who is responsible for keeping citizens informed.

Narkewicz: Mostly level of knowledge is due to citizens' interest. Reiterates that passionate ward networks are healthy for government-citizen relationships.

Gage asked if citizens are pleased or frustrated with working to maintain relationship with government.

Sullivan: When neighborhood requests info, the government delivers.

Churchill (to Sullivan): You have representative town meeting, you've worked with councils, how do you compare an executive working with town meeting vs. with a council?

Sullivan has observed Palmer and Longmeadow forums. Sullivan believes generally that there is concern that pay rate for mayor is not high enough to draw quality pool of applicants, particularly in a smaller community.

Churchill clarified question, asking specifically about personal experience as a manager working with town meeting vs with a town council.

Sullivan: I can't answer that question. However, without town meeting the process is faster, and can expedite urgent matters more easily. Although some believe this fast pace to be detrimental.

Churchill: How does planning work?

Narkewicz: Bodies like the Planning Board are appointed by mayor. The Planning Board has zoning responsibility, and can propose amendments and ordinances. There are public hearing requirements for zoning, and under Massachusetts general law there is a 2/3 Council approval requirement to adopt zoning. Thus, there is a higher bar for zoning than normal propositions.

Sullivan: He does not like an elected Planning Board. Said the perception was that special permits were not equitable or fair. It is necessary to have the executive branch responsible for Planning Board, or you risk having a "disjointed vision" where the executive branch "is not having a real part of what you are planning and what you are planning to be." Added that definition in functions and having people clearly responsible is important.

Hanneke: Have you seen Master Plan go forward for "extra passage," by town meeting or a council and has that requirement seemed to get town on the same page?

Sullivan: Yes in all three experiences…differing interpretations of Master Plan cause rifts in town government more than between citizens.

Narkewicz: Master Plans have gone to city council for un-required endorsement. Endorsements by specific commissions for specifics topics is a common move. It is important for relevant commissions to weigh in.

Churchill: Does your council have subcommittees?

Narkewicz stated "Essentially any piece of legislation that comes to council gets referred to committee." Recently eliminated Board of Public Works, and the City Council formed Public Works Committee in response.

Churchill asked if this was outside of Council. Narkewicz affirmed. Noted that water and sewer rates were referred to multiple bodies outside of the Council.

Grabbe: Many Amherst residents are concerned about corruption in mayor-council system, with mayors indicted across country. Is there vulnerability to corruption in mayor-council system? Are there safeguards to corruption? History of small town corruption in the state?

Sullivan stated that due to the "nature of the beast" fundraising is essential. Accordingly, it is essential to use judgment to determine appropriate and inappropriate donations. Mayors in '60s and '70s in Holyoke and Chicopee had corruption scandals. Sullivan said that there is no difference between a dishonest town manager and mayor.

Narkewicz was not familiar with a history of corruption in Northampton. There is mandated compliance with state and local campaign finance laws. Finance reports are publicized with information about donors. There is mandated annual ethics training. Agreed with colleague that corruption is not inherent to mayor-council system. Believed that Town Meeting being exempt from Open Meeting Law is a recipe for corruption, as open meetings and public records are essential.

Grabbe asked if there is anything inherent in mayor council system that makes it more vulnerable to corruption. Narkewicz didn't think so.

Sullivan: Mayor can endorse candidates, but a town manager can't. The role of town manager is further restricted than that of mayor.

Churchill: Imagine you are on Commission, what advice do you have?

Sullivan said if you can get Northampton-style mayor-council, with someone like Mayor Narkewicz, "you'll do really well." Sullivan commended the Commission for due diligence investigating government structure.

Narkewicz said "The key is having that clear delineation of roles." He warned that a dilution in powers makes accountability and efficiency difficult. He added it is easier for a state representative to work with communities if there is a single individual responsible. He stressed the clear accountability that comes with having one person at top of hierarchy.

Gage said it was a very helpful discussion. Wants to talk again with guests in future.

APPROVE PREVIOUS MINUTES

Churchill asked to approve minutes from last meeting. Gage stated that there is a slight issue with page four's final bullet that includes the phrase "provide public access to decision-making at right time." Gage thanked Fricke for the careful minutes but wished to adjust the bullet to read "provide public access to decision-making before the decisions are made in such a way that they influence decisions."

Churchill called for approval. All Commission members approved minutes by consensus.

COMPARE IMPROVED TOWN MEETING-BASED MODEL TO COUNCIL-BASED MODEL

Churchill said last meeting there was a two-column chart with the best town meeting form and the best town council form (improved town meeting vs. town council-mayor). Last meeting people provided charts and documents discussing benefits of changed town meetings and discussed pros and cons of each government-style. The current task before the February 2nd meeting with consultants is to complete re-investigation and reconsideration of town meeting. Grabbe passed to members and audience the "distillation of comments from previous meeting." Churchill passed to members the pro/con formatted document for discussion.

Stein said she converted her remarks from last week to the original template. She put in thought and switched from proposed 240 Town Meeting members to 120 because it's a more ideal number. Gage asked about briefly discussing notes from previous meeting. Churchill said we can weave into discussion.

Rueschemeyer: What is today's goal? We are on rushed schedule, members have good sense of each other's preferences, so what is process moving forward? Need to "wrestle with" tonight.

Churchill: Important to flesh out what Town Meeting would look like, flesh out what Council would look like, and come to vote regarding potential change in direction.

Rueschemeyer: Let's have real discussion about what to do moving forward, seems like wasted time to go through again.

Churchill said it's not repeating arguments, but rather going through together to see if people will change votes. Offered going straight to vote. Rueschemeyer clarified she wanted to work together to determine how to come up with proposal that combines preferences of everyone. Rhodes asked if responses part of record? Hanneke affirmed. Rueschemeyer asked if Churchill

intended a straw vote. Churchill affirmed and asked Commission if there was interest in compromise. Grabbe said that it was useful to go through pro/con exercise even though he personally is sure he wants mayor-council. Gage and Churchill agreed that the goal tonight is to inform vote and explore pros and cons. Hanneke said that on citizen participation issue, each member gets a minute to talk. Rueschemeyer said if you have a question or comment, ask the person about it, don't just make statements. Weiss agreed.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Hanneke: Town Meeting has massive citizen participation, but unfortunately participating isn't meaningful due to the participation coming too late in process. Council form doesn't support "raw" participation as much as town meeting, but the participation is more influential.

Gage: Improved town meeting would have neighborhood councils, staff liaison, and reduced membership. Supported a 150 member starting point for discussion. Said Council has less participation, doesn't think public would feel involved. Stated this issue to be very important.

Rhodes: Town Meeting has people representing their personal points of view, not the precincts'. Stated that representation of larger community is a "false premise" and "fantasy." Said Town Council with citizen councils per precinct is ideal.

Fricke: Values of participation, accountability and representation seem to be overlapping. Both forms of government can improve participation. Excited about engagement officer in either system. There is a lack of transparency with town meeting candidates. Favors citizen participation by holding elections with fewer candidates and clearer choices.

Churchill: Town meeting seems self-appointed. Agrees it is participatory but for only the citizens involved, and added it is hard to access representatives. Said that with councils, constituencies are important, and that Town Meeting wastes time that could be better used by committees and boards. Added that Amherst doesn't currently have adequate communication between citizens and upper levels of government.

Grabbe: Average town meeting is 184 members, which only represents 1% of voters. Said town meeting members are elected by name recognition or self-selected. He is excited about mayor council system and commends Gage for supplemental ideas.

Stein: Supports modified Town Meeting, and believes it is possible to engage voters in precinct meetings. Said that Narkewicz pointed out 151 people turned up at council, which is less than the turnout at Town Meeting. Added that the percentage voting in Northampton is lower than Amherst.

Grabbe: The percentage voting in Northampton is higher than Amherst.

Stein: Will stand to be corrected. In either government system, the citizen participation measures are important.

Rueschemeyer: Town meeting members interact with people around them. Supports size of town meeting and believes it is better representation of community. Reviewed every city council in state and found female representation is severely lacking in city councils. You "can't beat that diversity of opinion" in Town Meeting.

Weiss: Don't confuse participation with elections, because voting is participation, and thus town meeting is always going to be more participatory than council. Said Town Meeting is valid participation, and disagrees with Rhodes. Unsure of how well town meeting represents community and said that with a council it is easier to communicate with constituents, so this needs to be strengthened in Town Meeting. Weiss said there was only one contested seat in Northampton election. Doesn't favor elected planning board, wants split appointment process between Select Board and Town Meeting.

CLEAR VOICE FOR AMHERST

Weiss: Executive branch, mayor is a clearer voice.

Rueschemeyer: Mayor or Select Board Chair presents clear voice.

Stein: Not clear on implication of "voice." Said a town manager can do an equal or better job being a voice than a mayor.

Grabbe: Mayors have more clout with state officials. The Select Board has no single head.

Churchill: "Diffuse executive leadership" creates difficulties in negotiating with multiple people and maintaining a singular vision. Prefers council form, and mayor.

Fricke: Worried about disproportionate mayoral voice, although a mayor is preferable to diffuse executive.

Gage: Who is the "voice" speaking to? Concerned about relationships between town developers, wealth gaps, and the mayor.

Hanneke: Agrees with other members that council form is preferable in this regard. It represents a solid voice for emergency responses and other crises.

Rhodes: Mayor definitely provides "focal point," but would like to discuss manager option as well.

DEMOGRAPHICS AND INTEREST REPRESENTATION

Rhodes: It is too difficult to contact Town Meeting members. At least other types of representatives mention a belief in the values of constituents.

Hanneke: Town Meeting is more diverse in terms of gender, race, etc. excepting age.

Gage: Town Meeting is more diverse. Objects to Rhodes' use of the word "charade" to describe Town Meeting.

Fricke: Council form with "vigorous outreach" is preferable because it can maintain or increase scope of electorate and pool of candidates

Churchill: 240 isn't representative in comparison with 19,000 voters. Town Meeting is inefficient, contentious, and an "aristocracy of time."

Grabbe: Cites Umass Political Science Department study that Town Meeting members are older, richer, and whiter than general population. Said Amherst has a history of electing women and they won't be underrepresented in mayoral system.

Stein: Comparing idealized version of mayor-council to current Town Meeting is unfair because the Commission's charge is to come up with the ideal form of government. Town Meeting may be older and whiter, but still more diverse than a City Council. Additionally, citizen's petitions are easily brought to town meeting.

Rueschemeyer: Is Council going to be less old, rich, and white? Not one state Council has 50% women. Said the time factor isn't all-encompassing.

Weiss: Agrees with Rueschemeyer. A Town Council is also an aristocracy of time. Said that as a Town Meeting member he often gets stopped often by people to discuss politics, and feels he maintains a constituency.

EFFECTIVE DELIBERATIVE AND EFFICIENT STRUCTURES

Weiss: Passes time due to issues with wording.

Rueschemeyer: Town Meeting is very deliberative due to diversity of opinions.

Stein: Brookline is a better model for Town Meeting. A council isn't as educational. Town Meeting provides better information to citizens about what's going on.

Grabbe: Town meeting has problems with dissemination of misinformation. It doesn't meet often enough and its size makes it difficult to deliberate properly.

Churchill: Town Meeting gets one shot at an issue, and if it's not ready, we have to wait at least 6 months to take another shot at it. A Town Council can take the time needed to resolve issues effectively, since it meets regularly. And it's small enough to have back-and-forth discussion, which Town Meeting can't do.

Fricke: Town Council meets more often which is a benefit, and the public has access to both councilors and public meetings for inclusion in deliberations.

Gage: It is very tough for 9 people to deliberate, as evidenced by experience on Charter Commission. How could a council deliberate more? Believes Commission is engaged in "magical thinking" in favor of Town Council. Added that "efficiency" and "deliberation" are opposites.

Hanneke: Hearing opinions in Town Meeting is not the same thing as discussing, particularly because votes happen directly after. A city council is more efficient.

Rhodes: A council can determine the length of time they focus on a topic. It is important to have control over how much attention they pay to issues.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

Rhodes: Town Council has greater transparency and accountability because it must adhere to state mandated ethics, mandated open meetings, and can have no conflicts of interest. Whereas town meeting members can create factions, convene outside of town meetings, and vote on issues that directly affect them.

Hanneke: There is little accountability in town meeting due to uncontested nature of elections. If town meeting members believe they don't represent voters, that clearly indicates lack of accountability.

Gage: "Accountability" is too open-ended of a word.

Fricke: The topic of "communication" and means to enhance it is the important thing to focus on. A council is more conducive to empowering and involving voters, and it's easier to maintain transparency.

Churchill: Communication structure with checks and balances and that links neighborhoods to council and mayor is important in making decision-making more accountable and transparent. Also the idea that representatives have constituents who can vote them out if they're not satisfied. Favors Town Council in this respect.

Grabbe: 96% of Town Meeting incumbents are successful in re-election. Citizens can't keep track of or identify their 24 members representing them. Decision-making "devolves to Town Manager." Favors weekly communication emails in new government structure.

Stein: As a Town meeting Member she feels very accountable to precinct. Received three communications that day regarding upcoming vote. Electronic voting records mean that there is a good level of transparency, and it would be similar with a town council. Wants to determine how politically informed Northampton citizens are compared with Amherst citizens.

Rueschemeyer: Not convinced Select Board and School Committee are competitive or identifiable. Select Board is 100% in favor of recent school issue while voters are about 50-50. Said incumbents get re-elected due to inherent nature of politics.

Weiss: Said Commission members don't deliberate, they make series of statements. Acknowledges that's off-topic and says accountability and transparency can be enforced in either government structure. Town Meeting members not all on same page about their responsibilities.

CULTURE OF TOLERANCE AND RESPECT

Weiss: "Most people don't care about Town Meeting and Select Board unless there's a hot topic." Things tend to be 50-50 divisive in Amherst, on town-wide votes and in Charter Commission. Respect in Amherst government is lacking, but tolerance is sufficient. Neither government form has edge in this regard.

Rueschemeyer: Are people on the Town Council going to be more respectful? Maybe in a smaller setting people are more restrained?

Stein: There is less tolerance and respect regarding people of color in Amherst. Town Meeting is better suited to addressing this.

Grabbe: Elections that measure public opinion are necessary. There are many interruptions in Town Meeting. It may be prudent to place preamble in Charter setting goals for political culture. Council members with mandates from voters diminishes citizen distrust.

Churchill: Disagrees with Weiss that it is a 50-50 town. Rather, our current system is unable to find larger areas of agreement. It's better at saying No than saying Yes.

Fricke: Neither system is going to reduce "rancor." There is the potential for greater respect towards Council members as they are winners of large chunks of electorate.

Gage: Disagrees that a different form of government will automatically solve intrinsic problems. A Council has the potential to be very contentious. It is necessary to start holding Town Meeting members more accountable.

Hanneke: Agrees with preceding comments. A singular individual at the top makes it more difficult to shirk blame, whereas multi-member bodies can avoid accountability.

Rhodes: Isolated instances of disrespect are not representative of business as usual during town meeting. Occasional disrespect is inevitable and "one incident cannot be used to paint the entire body as disrespectful."

VISION FOR AMHERST

Rhodes: "240 people cannot do strategic and long-term planning. Period." A smaller group of people is better suited for this task.

Hanneke: A mayor has to run on a vision, and this promotes long term planning. 120 or 240 people don't have to campaign on visions.

Gage: Worried about mayor taking campaign contributions. Amherst needs a 15-year plan built by people who don't have re-election and fundraising incentives.

Fricke: Agrees with Gage about risks. Managers don't have to focus on re-election is an advantage.

Churchill: Current structure can't address long-term future of Amherst. Additionally, there is no communication structure. Neighborhoods represented by councilors are superior, and town-wide elections offer the chance to present alternate visions and ratify one of them.

Grabbe: Four years with potential of second term is enough time to get some good work done. Will consider elected or ½ elected planning board. Town meeting isn't visionary.

Stein: Town managers are potent forces for change. Believes Narkewicz's effectiveness is due to prior experience as legislative aide.

Rueschemeyer: Initially favored mayor due to potential for long-term vision for town. Doesn't feel comfortable with unelected town manager being responsible for vision.

Weiss: Select Board and Town Manager can jointly plan future. A mayoral system relies on luck in obtaining excellent candidate. A manager is vetted more intensively and objectively.

AVOID BIG MONEY

Weiss: There is unequivocally more big money with mayor and council, and this "introduces possibility" of corruption.

Rueschemeyer: Necessity for fundraising is a limiting factor on mayoral candidate pool.

Stein: Agrees with Weiss and Rueschemeyer, although the mayoral system may not be more corrupt.

Grabbe: The Commission can construct mechanisms to ward off corruption. Town Meeting members are not subject to conflict of interest laws which invites abuse of power.

Churchill: Precinct level counselors don't need much money. Town-wide counselors and mayor would be "roughly analogous" to town-wide elections in the current system.

Fricke: Agrees with Churchill about relatively low costs of accessing council system as candidate.

Gage: Concerned not necessarily about outright corruption but rather a system favoring wealthier citizens. Wealth influences politics disproportionately.

Hanneke: Agrees with all commission members. The Town Meeting form avoids corruption and big money better. Wrote up a more in-depth document regarding viewpoints. Hanneke then distributed this document to Commission members.

Rhodes: Doesn't believe that money will permeate system differently depending on the government system.

Churchill: Calls for final thoughts.

Rhodes: Appreciates hearing Commissioners' points of views.

Hanneke: Recognizes agreement and lack thereof.

Gage: Interested in proposals based on modifications of current government system.

Fricke: Acknowledges that both systems have trade-offs and risks.

Churchill: Some ideas for citizen participation are applicable to both systems.

Grabbe: Mayor-council choice is "expression of collective wisdom" that includes a variety of citizen participation mechanisms provided by town meeting supporters.

Stein: Town Meeting can propose changes to its operations as well.

Rueschemeyer: Seeks "robust minority report." Learned a lot about what changes need to be made.

Weiss: Wants to push reforms through town meeting if Charter fails on town vote. Agrees with Stein and Rueschemeyer.

Churchill: Thank you Commission. Anyone switching votes?

Rhodes: Wants to consider town manager and council.

Churchill: Acknowledges no votes have changed.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Kitty Axelson-Berry: Interested in Sullivans' remarks regarding money in politics, particularly the "nature of the beast" comment. Hierarchy tends to have corruption. Limiting campaign contributions to $500 doesn't do much. Power-seeking individuals gravitate toward positions like mayor and councilor.

Stephanie O'Keeffe: Thought about this for a long period of time, and progress in Amherst is "stymied by practical and legal realities." The Select Board has limited authority. A Town Meeting vote is essentially whether or not the member is aligning self with administrative

recommendations, which creates a "false dichotomy." Recommendations have a small amount of board and voter input.

Larry Kelly: Visited Select Board on Monday night and requested a nonbinding question on March 28 ballot about whether or not to retain town meeting structure. It is important to ask voters a charter-related question, especially when the opportunity is free. The people who vote on this referendum are the same people who will vote on the town charter.

Maurianne Adams: Believes the excellent ideas proposed previously by the Commission were discussed solely by the members who favored keeping Town Meeting. The opposed members discussed only the current iteration of government. Neighborhood constituencies are not quite as unified as they appear to be. Additionally, citizens elect Town Meeting members for their critical thinking skills and judgment, in addition to political views.

Walter Wolnik: Town Meeting Coordinating Committee has a significant meeting tomorrow afternoon. The spring of 2017 will likely bring proposals to Town Meeting that could change it ahead of charter vote.

Churchill: A similar thing occurred in Framingham, in which Town Meeting was altered before the Charter was proposed to voters.

Richard Morse: Commends arguments made by pro-Town Meeting members. Said he is still a critic of Town Meeting. Feels disconnect between citizens and government and is skeptical of how much voters are involved in current government process.

Ted Parker: Asked why three of four pro-Town Meeting members did not support Charter review. Emphasized discrepancy between current and previous positions on Town Meeting. Cites survey of Town Meeting indicating members tend to be wealthier homeowners. Additionally, Narkewicz didn't raise so much money, and it didn't seem like big money was involved in the Northampton election.

Kevin Collins: Moved to town in 1963 and has had personal experience with zoning laws, which need to change after 50 years. Accordingly, Amherst is overdue for an overhaul. It is important to include future residents of Amherst in discussion, but Town Meeting has no fiduciary duty to future residents. Amherst government's undefined responsibility to future residents needs to be clarified and cemented.

PLAN FOR UPCOMING MEETINGS

Grabbe said Brookline is no model for citizen participation. It has lower turnout. Stein sad that might be because they are content with the way their Town is run. Weiss said it's not right to continue comments. Gage distributed Listening Workshops listings. Churchill said Listening Workshops will be discussed next meeting, which is February 2nd at 7.15pm.

The meeting adjourned at 9.47p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jacob Livingston

Documents presented:
Template for comparing Town Meeting vs. Council forms on basis of Commission's values
Summary of last meeting's discussion points (Grabbe)
Mandi Jo Hanneke's explanation of reasons for supporting mayor-council government
Listening Workshops listing (Gage)